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American Labor Party

Platform and plan of organization of American...

[New York]

1919

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PLATFORM *and* PLAN *of*
ORGANIZATION *of*

American Labor Party

of

GREATER NEW YORK

Adopted at

CONFERENCE *of* TRADE UNIONS

HELD IN NEW YORK

JANUARY *11-12, 1919*

Office: 32 UNION SQUARE
Room *806*
Telephone: *Stuyvesant 1905*

Introduction to the Platform of the American Labor Party.

TO meet the great problems brought up by the sudden termination of the World War, organized labor of New York City, as represented by the Central Federated Union of New York City, the Central Labor Union of Brooklyn and the Women's Trade Union League, appointed committees on reconstruction. After a careful study of the problem, the reconstruction committees came to the oncclusion that not only did the existing laws make impossible the carrying out a thorough-going and effective program of reconstruction, but that the dominant political parties were either unable or unwilling to meet the emergency created by the cessation of hostilities and the problems of demobilization. Organized labor was therefore forced to enter the field of political activity. The result was the birth of the American Labor Party.

On January 11, 1919, the combined reconstruction committees called a convention of the representatives of organized labor, who met at Yorkville Casino. At this convention, which lasted two days, the entire labor movement of New York City was represented by 884 delegates representing the Central Federated Union, the Central Labor Union, and the Women's Trade Union League, as well as 152 locals, 41 international unions, the United Hebrew Trades and the United Board of Business Agents of the Building Trades.

Membership in the American Labor Party is open to workers—hand or brain—either as individuals or as organized groups. Individual enrollment can be secured by sbuscribing to the platform and the payment of 25 cents monthly. Labor organizations can affiliate and enroll with the American Labor Party by endorsing its platform and enrolling 75 per cent. of its membership and paying 5 cents monthly per member.

8 April, 1920 - C.R.W.

Workers, the great cataclysm that convulsed Europe, marked the birth pangs of a new social order. That new order, which will be characterized by industrial and political democracy, can not materialize without *your* co-operation and support. In your hands, brothers and sisters, rest not only your own fortunes, but the destiny of your class. As members of the American Labor Party you can usher in the dawn of a new era in which democracy and brotherhood will be the guiding stars.

Join us and help the American Labor Party regenerate society.

AMERICAN LABOR PARTY OF GREATER NEW YORK

If we, the workers, are to enjoy freedom and embrace our full opportunities in the new nation about to emerge out of the suffering and sacrifice of the great world conflict now closed, it behooves labor to formulate its own program of fundamental, social, economic and political change and establish an independent American Labor party to carry out that program. If we are to escape from the decay of civilization, we must insure that what is presently to be built is a social order based not on fighting, but on fraternity; not on competitive struggle for the means of bare life, but on deliberately planned co-operation in production and distribution by and for the benefit of all who participate with hand or

brain; not on the inequality of riches, but on a systematic approach toward a healthy equality of material circumstances for every person born in the world. There should be no subject nations, subject races, subject colonies, subject classes, or a subject sex; but in industry as well as in government, we propose to build on that equal freedom, that general consciousness of consent, and that widest possible participation in power, both economic and political which is characteristic of democracy.

We, therefore, favor as the tentative platform of the Labor party the following program:

(1.) RESTORATION OF FREE SPEECH, FREE PRESS AND FREE ASSEMBLAGE.

The immediate restoration of all fundamental political rights—free speech, free press, free assemblage, and free worship; the removal of all war-time restraints upon the interchange of ideas and the movement of people among communities and nations, and the liberation of all persons held in prison or indicted under charges due to their championship of the rights of labor or their patriotic insistence upon the rights guaranteed to them by the constitution, and the restoration to them of their political and civil rights.

(2) PUBLIC WORKS TO PREVENT UNEMPLOYMENT.

It is imperative that suitable provisions against being suddenly turned adrift without resources should be made, not only for soldiers and sailors, but also for the millions of workers in munition works and other trades who will be dicharged long before most of the army can be disbanded, and to accomplish this we demand that the Federal government agencies undertake the scientific replacement of soldiers and workers back to their jobs.

To avoid during the readjustment period the natural waste that would come from the idleness of millions of men we recommend that the nation, the states and the municipalities undertake at standard rate of wages and hours engineering projects of national magnitude which would give employment to discharged soldiers and sailors and displaced civilian labor and thereby permanently enhance the productive capacity of the nation, such projects as: Utilization of water power; development of irrigation, canals and ports; road building; government housing; reforestation, and reclamation of arid and desert land.

(3) THE UNIVERSAL ENFORCEMENT OF THE AMERICAN STANDARD OF LIVING.

We favor the universal enforcement of an

American minimum of living, which is to secure to every member of the community, in good time and bad alike (and not only to the strong and able, the well born or the fortunate), all the requisites of healthy life and worthy citizenship. And as practical measures toward the carrying out of this minimum we include the following:

A. Minimum Wage Law. We hold that every adult worker should be guaranteed a basic wage sufficient to provide all requirements for a full development of body, mind and character, and to aid in promoting such a just condition we demand that in all industry a democratic board of adjustment shall be created, composed equally of representatives of workers and employers to (1) establish a standard wage based upon the average cost of supporting a family of five persons.

B. The Standard of Working Week and Working Day. A standard working week shall not exceed 44 hours, and standard work day of eight hours, further to be reduced when necessary to minimize unemployment.

C. Right to Organize. The establishment by law of the unqualified right of the workers whether in private or Federal, state or municipal employ, to organize and to deal collectively with their employers through such representatives of their unions as they choose and the legal recognition of the principle that the worker has a property right to his job.

D. Social Insurance. To provide protection for the workers by state insurance against accidents, disease, unemployment and old age, and the continuation after the war of soldiers' and sailors' insurance; extension of such life insurance by the government without profit, to all men and women.

E. Labor Laws. The enforcement and improvement to a uniform standard throughout the states of all factory laws, child labor laws, laws protecting women.

(4) PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF PUBLIC UTILITIES.

The public utilities taken over by the government as a war necessity should be permanently retained. Other public utilities which are the foundation of the successful reorganization of industry to be taken out of the hands of private owners. We, therefore, favor the municipal, state and national ownership of all public utilities, such as railways, telegraphs, telephones, mines, stock yards, grain elevators, irrigation dams and water power plants, unused lands, and the War Emergency Fleet Corporation to re-establish a merchant marine, and that they be democratically managed by the workers.

(5) ENCOURAGEMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND REDUCTION OF THE COST OF LIVING.

Reduction of the cost of living to a just level immediately, and as a permanent policy,

by the development of co-operation and the elimination of wasteful methods, parasitical middle men and all profiteering in the creation and distribution of the products of industry and agriculture, in order that the actual producers may enjoy the fruits of their toil, and the systematic stimulation and encouragement by the government of agriculture and stock raising.

(6) DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE.

Democratic control of industry and commerce for the general good by those who work with hand and brain, and the elimination of autocratic domination of the forces of production either by selfish private interests or bureaucratic agents of government. The equitable sharing of the proceeds among all who participate in any capacity, and only among these, and the adoption in particular services and occupations of those systems and methods of administration and control that may be found in practice best to promote, not profiteering, but public interest.

(7) DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF EDUCATION.

Education being the keystone to democracy, we favor the following:

(1) The creation of a department of education the head of which is to be a member of the President's Cabinet.

(2) The administration of local educational systems by elective and paid boards of education.

(3) College and university training free to all who are qualified.

(4) Democratization of education in public schools and universities and public libraries through the participation of labor and the organized teachers and librarians in the determination of new methods, policies and programs in this fundamental field and the extension of the principle of free public instruction and the furnishing of free text books to colleges and universities.

(5) The war being over, we demand the elimination of all military training from all educational institutions except the regularly established government military and naval schools.

(8) MEASURES TO SECURE FREEDOM AND EQUALITY.

(A) Equal Rights for Men and Women.

Complete equality of men and women in government and industry, with fullest enfranchisement of women and equal pay for men and women doing equal work, limitation of hours for women employed in industry, prevention of night work and the establishment of proper standards for the protection of their health and safety throughout the Union.

(B) Power to Declare Laws Unconstitutional.

In view of the fact that the decisions of the Supreme Court have retarded the progress of humanitarian legislation in the United States, as is especially evidenced by the recent Child Labor decision, we favor the curbing of the power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional.

(C) Prohibition

We oppose any form of prohibition curtailing the personal liberty of the individual.

(D) Representation of Labor.

Representation of labor in proportion to its voting strength in all departments of government and upon all government commissions and agencies of demobilization and reconstruction.

(9) WAR REFERENDUM AND MILITARY TRAINING.

(A) No war shall be declared by the government prior to a referendum vote of all voters of the country.

(B) We are unequivocally opposed to any form of universal compulsory military training in time of peace.

(10) TAXATION TO FINANCE INCREASED GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES.

To provide sufficient revenue to liquidate the public debt arising out of the war, to

carry on all public works and improvements and to render financial assistance to certain projects upon which the economic future of the country and the well-being of the people will necessarily depend, we favor (a) 100 per cent. tax on an annual individual incomes above $100,000, and in addition, taxation to eliminate excessive inheritances, (b) a progressive increase in taxes upon all profits, unearned increments and incomes, (c) the use of public profits from nationally-owned utilities and resources, and the use of revenue derived from a system of taxation on land values which will stimulate rather than retard production.

(11) WORLD PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE OF WORKERS.

We indorse the program of peace aims and guarantees for world democracy contained in the 14 points enunciated by our President, Woodrow Wilson. In accordance with these principles, we demand the application of the principle of self-determination to Ireland. We further demand that our government refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Russia, or any other country, and the immediate withdrawal of the armed forces of the Uinted States from Russia. We favor the efforts to make the peace of the world permanent by the establishing of a League of Nations.

Supplementing the League of Nations, and to make that instrument of international democracy vitally effective for humanity, we favor a league of the workers of all nations pledged and organized to enforce the destruction of autocracy, militarism and economic imperialism throughout the world and to establish an international labor standard to bring about world-wide disarmament and open diplomacy, to the end that there shall be no more kings and no more wars.

PLAN OF ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN LABOR PARTY OF NEW YORK CITY.

ARTICLE A.

NAME.—Section 1. The name of this organization shall be the American Labor Party of Greater New York.

SUBJECT.—Section 2. Its object is to unite for independent political action in an American Labor Party all voters who believe in political, social and industrial democracy.

COMPOSITION. — Section 3. The Labor Party of New York City shall be composed of enrolled members who subscribe to its principles and platform and pledge support to its candidates.

Section 3a. Labor organizations may affiliate by having their membership enroll and by paying dues on their members at 5 cents per member per month.

CONTROL.—Section 4. The affairs of the party organization shall be administered by a City Central Committee and County committees for each county.

CANDIDATES. — Section 5. No candidate of the Labor Party shall accept indorsement of either the Democratic or the Republican parties, nor any other parties that stand for private ownership of public utilities; nor shall the Labor Party endorse any candidates of the above-mentioned parties.

ARTICLE B.

MEMBERSHIP. — Section 1. All voters who comply with Article A, Section 3, and who contribute 25 cents per month dues to their respective assembly district organizations shall be entitled to all rights of membership in the American Labor Party of New York City, provided, however, that prior to the formation of assembly district organizations, dues shall be payable to the secretary-treasurer of the organization committee.

ARTICLE C.

COMMITTEES.—Section 1. County committees shall have such powers and exercise such functions as are prescribed by law, and shall consist of the delegates to the City Central Committee of the organized assembly districts of the rsepective counties.

Section 2. The City Central Committee shall consist of five delegates from each assembly district and one additional delegate

for every one hundred members or major fraction thereof. The City Central Committee shall be the controlling body of the party and shall possess and exercise all powers not specifically granted to other committees and officers shall be subject to the decisions of the membership as expressed through the initiative, referendum and recall.

Section 3. The Organization Committee shall have charge of the work of organization and education. It shall secure speakers, circulate literature and conduct the enrollment of voters into the party. It shall have supervision over and charge of all moneys and property belonging to the American Labor Party of New York City. It shall elect a Chairman and a Secretary-Treasurer who shall be required to furnish a suitable and adequate bond. The Organization Committee shall exercise the above functions only until the City Central Committee is organized, and until that time shall consist of 15 members of the Joint Reconstruction Committee created by the Central Federated Union of New York City, the Central Labor Union of Brooklyn and the New York Women's Trade Union League, and of five representatives of central labor bodies that may be admitted by the committe and, in addition, of six delegates elected by this convention.

Section 4. It shall be the duty of the Organization Committ to organize each assembly district as soon as there are enrolled members

enough, provided that no assembly district shall be organized until there are at least fifteen members.

Article D.

Section 1. The members of each Assembly District shall form a district organization by electing a Secretary, Chairman and the number of delegates as required by Section 2, Article C.

Section 2. Each assembly district shall adopt its own rules of procedure and set its own time for meetings. It shall organize its territory by election districts and promote the progress of the party in every way.

Section 3. Three-fifths of the monthly dues, fifteen (15) cents shall be retained in the treasury of the assembly district organizations and two-fifths, ten (10) cents, forwarded to the Secretary-Treasurer of the City Central Committee.

Article E.

This plan of organization shall remain in force until the City Central Committee shall adopt a Constitution and By-Laws, to be subject to the approval of the referendum vote of the members. It may be added to or amended by a two-thirds vote of the Organization Committee at a regular meeting.

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